

# The Granchina *Nepenthes* of the Phillipines in Retrospect

By Bonifacio D. Uy (No address submitted)

The camera felt odd in my hand as I lifted it from the box where I'd stored it 30 years ago. Opening the cover my confidence sank low when the flap tore loose at the slightest tug. Having had to pry the camera open to put in a roll of film was too much, so I decided to take a break and contemplate on the task ahead.

Going to the south of Cebu to search for *Nepenthes* would be less arduous but also less exciting than Surigao. But I wanted to see one and should a mistake be made in data gathering, rectifying it would be much easier than if a trip to Surigao was to be made. Heartened I proceeded with the task at hand.

At 4:30 in the morning of April 4, off I went to meet a friend who was to take me to the highlands of Dalaguete. We got to Dalaguete by bus and transferred to a jeep that took us to Mantalongon a famous market deep in the hills. We were packed into the jeep like cattle. Altogether the trip would have been pure hell were it not for the picturesque view from the window of the jeep as we slowly passed that point where the road is narrowest and the ravine deepest.

The higher the jeepney went, the cooler it became as the jeep labored the 15 km to Mantalongon. The cool air of the high altitude was a welcome respite to the searing heat of the drought that hit this part of the country. Also, the clean air made one wonder what makes the city with its smog and diminishing quality of life so alluring to people who flock to it in ever increasing numbers every day.

We got to Mantalongon at lunchtime and immediately set out to search for *Nepenthes*. As we climbed the sun-scorched hillside the thought of another fruitless search ran through my mind time and again. Wild goose chases are simply not my cup of tea.



B. D. Uy in a patch of Granchina *Nepenthes* (*N. alata*)  
Photo by Author.

After a few hours of clambering up and down hills we came upon a little house. Though visibly worried by our presence the occupant of the house greeted us cordially. There has been a resurgence of guerrilla activity in these parts making the locals wary of strangers.

Asked about *Nepenthes* the guy pointed to a clump of bushes twenty meters from the house. Quickly I headed for the spot where saud-saud-the local name for *Nepenthes* is supposed to be and lo and behold there it was. *N. alata* had been sitting there all these times waiting for the world to discover it.

We hurriedly made some preliminary tests, because night was fast closing in and took home samples. More tests will be done next time.

Being a newcomer to the world of *Nepenthes* I wondered what makes this plant thrive in this part of the world. One thing is certain though, very soon *Nepenthes* will become extinct because the area is a farming community and the plant is lumped together with weed to be slashed and burned.

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## A Real Nice Trip to Southeast Asia

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Ever since I (Ric Maulder) was knee high to a grasshopper, I have always wanted to go to the tropics. Well, I finally got my chance to go and went to Sumatra to look for *Nepenthes*. It seemed, at first, that I was going on my own so I planned to spend all seven weeks in Sumatra. I wanted to climb new mountain areas to look for new species. As I was working away on my itinerary, three other people decided to come along. The plans changed so that we decided to spend one month in Sumatra and the rest of the time in Sarawak and West Malaysia and look mainly in known locations.

With this in mind, we decided to use Singapore as our jump-off point into Sumatra stopping off at Medan first. Once there, we hired a van with a driver named Iwan and went south through Sumatra in 4 days to a village called Gisting near Tanjungkarang in Lampung district at the extreme southern end of the island. All the way down the trans-Sumatran highway we saw *Nepenthes* which were *N. tobaica*, *N. reinwardtiana* (very common in the general area), *N. gracilis*, *N. ampullaria* and *N. mirabilis*. We harvested seed of *N. gracilis* in the Jambi district. The weather in south Sumatra was rather dry and *N. mirabilis* was growing on real dry roadside banks.

From Gisting we climbed Gunung Tanggamus where we met our first leeches and had to camp near the horrors that night. It was funny to watch them moving over the tents during the night. In the morning we set off curving our way through solid ratans all the way up to 2,000 meters before they gave way to a pure moss forest. At this elevation, we found *N. gymnamphora* and two of us decided to return, but Mike and I wanted to find *N. spathulata*. Further up, it was virtually impossible to get around and we seemed to be 5 to 10 feet off the ground walking over moss-covered tree trunks. We never saw it like this on any other mountain in S.E. Asia. We managed to find some *N. spathulata* and they are a fine, large, glossy-green plant with large pitchers. We never reached the summit as we had also run out of time. So with a few cuttings and seedlings, we ran down the mountain barely reaching the other two explorers before